THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Weather based insurance scheme *i.e.* Varsha Bima Yojana of Agriculture Insurance Company of India Ltd. (AIC) was implemented on pilot basis in four States including Andhra Pradesh during Kharif 2004. In Kharif 2005, the scheme has been implemented in 10 States including Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra covering more than 1.25 lakh farmers. In addition, some private insurance companies like ICICI-Lombard General Insurance Company, IFFCO-TOKYO General Insurance Company are also implementing weather based insurance particularly rain-fall insurance schemes on limited scale.

(c) to (e) Losses due to excess rain-fall are not covered at present under Varsha Bima Yojana. However, Joint Group constituted by the Government of India, to study the improvements required in the existing crop insurance schemes have recommended for evolving a farmer friendly weather based insurance scheme. The Government, at present, is in the process of consulting different stakeholders for the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Group.

World Bank assistance to Himachal Pradesh for apple plantation

t1809. SHRI BASHISTHA NARAIN SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the assistance through World Bank provided by the Central Government to the Government of Himachal Pradesh during the last three years to help economically backward people and SCs to grow apple plantation;

(b) whether it is a fact that weaker sections of Rohadu and Chhargaon Tehsil of Shimla district have not benefited from it; and

(c) if so, whether the Central Government will ask the State Government to look into the matter?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India has not provided any assistance of World Bank to Government of Himachal Pradesh during last 3 years to grow Apple plantations.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) and (c) Does not arise. However, Government of India is implementing a FAO sponsored project namely, "Apple Production improvement Project" at a total cost of US$ 3,60,000 in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal since March, 2003. Under this project assistance has been provided to Government of Himachal Pradesh to strengthen and develop the capabilities of the Government to improve apple productivity and nursery sector, through selected technologies, expert advice, training and planting material. Under the project three potential districts of Himachal Pradesh for apple production namely Shimla, Kullu and Chamba are covered.

Approving Price Support Scheme of Kerala

1810. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal seeking price support scheme for cash crops from Kerala Government is pending for sanction;

(b) if so, the decision, if any, arrived at on the same and if so, the details thereof, and if not the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government of Kerala has sought the intervention of Government to include the perennial crops under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme and if so, whether Government have taken any decision in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) No proposal for Government of Kerala seeking Price Support Scheme for cash crops is pending. On the request of State/UT Government, the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture is implementing Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for procurement of agricultural and horticultural commodities generally perishable in nature and not covered under Price Support Scheme. During 2005-06 on the request of Government of Kerala, the Ministry of Agriculture implemented MIS for procurement of 5050 MT Black pepper at the Market Intervention Price of Rs. 7000/- per qtl. from 15.2.2005 to 15.4.2005.

(c) The State Government of Kerala has requested for coverage of perennial/horticultural crops like coconut, arecanut, cashewnut, cardamom, tea, coffee etc. under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS). A Joint Group constituted by the Government to study the improvement